

My name is Dean Crepes, Director of Lexington County Voter Registration and Elections, in South Carolina. I am present today to give a statement concerning our absentee voting process, more specifically, UOCAVA, (Uniform and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act). I have a brief statement and then will entertain any questions that you may have. **UOCAVA establishes a framework** for military, and other Overseas Citizens to be able to vote in any election not only Lexington County, but the entire state of South Carolina. Being a veteran myself, I always voted absentee during my service, and I understand the need to ensure this opportunity is provided to the people that daily protects our right to vote, and their dependants, as well as other Citizens such as missionaries, teachers, and ex patriots, working abroad. In South Carolina voting rights of the military and overseas citizens have always been a high priority of the State General Assembly.

In 1992 the State General Assembly passed legislation to allow electronic transmission of applications and ballots only in an emergency situation such as war, conflict, military action, or military mobilization outside the continental United States which it would make it impractical for South Carolina citizens serving in the United States armed services to register or to vote in person in the normal manner.

In 1998 South Carolina participated in the VOI (Voting Over the Internet) sponsored by the Department of Defense. Of the jurisdictions chosen to participate, South Carolina was the only state participating on a statewide basis. In 2004, South Carolina was invited, and readily accepted, an invitation to participate in the SERVE (Secure Electronic Registration and Voting Experiment)... Unfortunately, this program was cancelled by the Department of Defense shortly before the 2004 Presidential Election.

In 2004, the Help America Vote Act extended absentee ballot requests made by military and overseas citizens, for period to include two General elections. This requirement made it very difficult for local election officials to locate UOCAVA voters since they move frequently.

The MOVE (Military and Overseas Empowerment Act) of 2009, remove the two General election requirement and stated that annually beginning 1 January of each year we would start taking requests for absentee voting for that year...this was a well needed change, it saved money and time because it eliminated the process of confirming that the UOCAVA voter had not relocated since the request was made.

To apply for an absentee ballot, a voter would call, write, or visit their Voter Registration office to request an application. The VR office would mail, fax, or email the application to the voter as normal. If emailing the application, the e-mail must contain a scan of the original application. A fax must also be of the original application. After completing the application, the voter would have the option to fax the application back to the VR office or to scan the application, attach it to an email, and send it to their county VR email address.

Then we send the absentee application to each requestor to be completed, returned, and filed according to the election, and upon approvals of all ballots, definitely no later than 45 days before the election, we immediately start, either mailing or electronically transmitting ballots, or faxing ballots, along with appropriate cover sheets for their signatures.

South Carolina has approximately 82,000 voters covered by this act. Many of these voters reside in remote locations with impediments and difficulties that prohibit the receipt of their ballots in a timely manner. In the 2008 Presidential election, of the 12,363 ballots issued to UOCAVA voters, only 8,667 were returned resulting in a 71% successful rate of return as compared to non-UOCAVA voters for the same elections was 97%. Lexington County was 81% for military, and 84% for citizens overseas, this was due to the 45 day transit both ways in the mail.

In 2010, Statewide Election, of the 1,757 ballots issued to UOCAVA voters, only 1,251 were returned resulting in a 69% successful rate of return as compared to non-UOCAVA voters for the same elections was 95%. Lexington County was 89% for military, and 86% for citizens overseas.

For the upcoming Presidential election, I expect all number to increase as more military and overseas citizens understand with not only Lexington County, but South Carolina as a whole, electronic transmission is the best and most efficient way to vote.

**UOCAVA voters are also afforded two additional options:**

- **Federal Post Card Application (FPCA, Standard Form 76):** The FPCA is an absentee ballot application, as well as a voter registration application for a person who is not already registered. The FPCA may be sent to the Board via mail, fax, or email. This application serves as a request for an absentee ballot for one calendar year.

- **Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot (FWAB):** The FWAB is a voter registration application, absentee ballot application, and a blank absentee ballot in one. The FWAB is used by UOCAVA voters who have no time or availability to receive return transmissions from their voter registration office. The voter completes the application information and writes-in names of candidates for whom he wishes to vote. The FWAB is sent one way from the voter to the voter registration office via mail, fax, or email; completing all processes at once. This application serves as a request for an absentee ballot for a specific election.

In Lexington County, one individual is designated as a responsible person for all absentee voting.....this person also serves as the UOCAVA representative..... a **specific fax and email address is designated to** receive such transmissions. Only those transmissions delivered to the designated account will be accepted. Upon receiving a completed application, and at the request of the voter, a ballot along with signature sheet is transmitted to the voter.....upon

receiving the voted ballot and the signature sheet....., It is immediately printed, placed in an envelope, an labeled, and placed in the absentee ballot box, and not touched again until Election day where trained individuals, along with appointed Election Commissioners, receive an oath..... open, and duplicate on to a hard ballot which can be read optically, upon successful tallying of all absentee ballots, the original, duplicated, and scanned ballots are secured with limited access.

**Instant Run-off Ballots (IRBs)** must be used for military and overseas citizens voting in primaries for federal offices or local where there is more than two candidates running under the same party for the same office. IRBs are sent along with the first primary ballot. The IRB allows the voter to rank candidates in their order of preference. For example: 1st choice, 2nd choice, 3rd choice, and 4th choice, etc. In case of a runoff, the vote goes to the candidate with the highest ranking among the candidates involved in the runoff. The State Election Commission provides IRBs for federal and state offices; local offices are added to include the county or local level.

Voters unable to vote by regular absentee ballot or in person due to requirements of military service, or who are living in an extremely isolated or remote areas of the world, no access to mail or electronic means.....may apply not earlier than 90 days before an election for a Special write-in absentee ballot (SWAB). The SWAB (Special Write-in absentee ballot) must be available for any primary, general election, or special election that includes federal offices, statewide offices, or local offices.

This ballot is used primarily by voters who, due to the reasons listed above, need to vote early and cannot wait for ballots to be printed. While military voters are eligible to vote a SWAB, many choose to use the **FWAB, (Federal write-in absentee ballot)**. The FWAB is a faster method since it doesn't require a separate application and multiple mailings/faxes/emails. However, the **SWAB (Special Write-in absentee ballot)** includes the offices to be voted upon and may include the candidate's names, while the FWAB is simply a blank ballot. To qualify for a SWAB, the voter must state that he is unable to vote by regular absentee ballot or in person due to requirements of military service or due to living in isolated areas or extremely remote areas of the world.

Due to the short two-week time period between the primary and run-off elections, when you send one of these special ballots, you should also send a separate, second ballot and return envelope. The second ballot is to be used in the event of a runoff. Both the second ballot and the return envelope should be marked "Runoff." Instructions are included informing the voter on how to complete and return the runoff ballot.

In Closing.....The ultimate primary goal is to provide instant access to the voter registration and absentee voting process for UOCAVA voters and to significantly increase the successful rate of return for ballots to a percentage that is equal to that of the general absentee voting population.